



AOT in Action

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

A Message from Director Sherry Henry:

Good afternoon,

Every month we receive updates from our international public relations and trade representatives on what they are accomplishing on behalf of the Arizona tourism industry. And every month we are continually impressed with what is being produced. This month, however, there is one standout project that we just had to share.

Following an AOT hosted press trip to Arizona, French journalist Gael Couturier produced a five-page article in *L'Equipe Mag*, which reached a readership of 3.8 million and an estimated PR value of more than \$800,000. It was an incredible piece which focused on a variety of travel opportunities available throughout the Grand Canyon State. This is wonderful coverage for our state and we want to thank all our industry partners who work with us to host journalists such as Mr. Couturier. It is rewarding to see the results of all our efforts!

Also, the latest industry research is in and now available on our website, www.AZOT.gov. The research reflects much of Q4 and Year-End statistics. For more information, please review the **AOT News** section below.

Have a great week!

Sherry Henry
Director, Arizona Office of Tourism

AOT News

Don't Miss the Wildlife Viewing as a Tourism Attraction Webinar

AOT, in collaboration with the [Arizona Watchable Wildlife Tourism Association](#) and the [Arizona Game and Fish Department](#), is offering a webinar geared toward developing wildlife viewing as a tourism attraction. More than 1.3 million people participate in Arizona's wildlife viewing contributing nearly \$1.2 billion dollars annually to the state's economy.

The goal of this workshop is to become aware of statewide opportunities that the viewing customers brings, as well as how to meet their expectations and have them return for more. Also, there will be some discussion on the activities and collaborations behind the scenes that help communities and businesses capitalize on the interests of this large and growing segment of the population.

Topics include: Partnerships, Economic benefits, Benefits of wildlife/birder oriented programs, What makes a wildlife-watcher friendly attraction, Who are the customers and what are they looking for and more.

Registration information below:

Title: Wildlife Viewing as a Tourism Attraction

Date: Thursday, January 26, 2012

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. MST

<https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/199976625>

For more information, please contact Glenn Schlottman, Community Relations Manager, at 602-364-3727 or via email at gschlottman@azot.gov.

New Update to AOT's Research Web site!

The following items have been updated in the Research and Statistics section of AOT's business-to-business Web site www.azot.gov.

- [County Lodging Q4 2011](#)
- [National, Regional, Arizona Lodging Q4 2011](#)
- [County Lodging December & YE 2011](#)
- [National, Regional, Arizona Lodging December & YE 2011](#)
- [Painted Cliffs Welcome Center Visitation Q4 2011](#)
- [Painted Cliffs Welcome Center Visitation YE 2011](#)
- [Airport Passenger Traffic October 2011](#)
- [Gross Sales & Tourism Taxes November 2011](#)
- [National Park Visitation November 2011](#) (preliminary)
- [State Park Visitation November 2011](#)

For additional information or questions, please contact Melissa Elkins, Research Manager, at 602-364-3716 or via e-mail at melkins@azot.gov.

SAVE the DATE: Governor's Conference on Tourism, July 11-13, 2012

The Arizona Governor's Conference on Tourism provides valuable networking opportunities, professional development sessions, nationally recognized speakers, a dedicated sponsor exhibit area and the Governor's Tourism Awards Luncheon. The conference, which will be held at the Arizona Biltmore in Phoenix, is consistently attended by more than 500 Arizona tourism industry professionals. It is one of our industry's most significant opportunities to attain information on

the latest trends affecting tourism. Look toward future editions of AOT in Action for registration information.

Upcoming Events & Activities

UK Media Mission

Dates: January 30 – February 3

Location: United Kingdom

Go West Summit

Date: February 6 – 9

Location: Las Vegas, NV

Authentic Arizona Southwest: Real Deal Ranches and the Rest Press Trip

Date: February 27 – March 3

Location: Tubac, Sonoita, Elgin, Patagonia, Nogales and Sasabe

Industry News

UNWTO Expects Tourism to Reach 1 Billion Arrivals in 2012

International arrivals grew by 4.4 percent in 2011 to 980 million, according to the latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer. With growth expected to continue in 2012, but at a slower rate, arrivals are on track to reach the 1 billion mark later this year. The 2011 arrivals rose from 939 million in 2010 in a year characterized by a stalled global economic recovery, major political changes in the Middle East and North Africa and natural disasters in Japan. By region, Europe (+6 percent) was the best performer, while by sub-region South America (+10 percent) topped the ranking. Contrary to previous years, growth was higher in advanced economies (+5 percent) than in emerging ones (+3.8 percent), due largely to the strong results in Europe, and setbacks in the Middle East and North Africa.

Despite persistent economic uncertainty, tourists to Europe reached 503 million in 2011, accounting for 28 million of the 41 million additional international arrivals worldwide. Central and Eastern Europe and Southern Mediterranean destinations (+8 percent each) experienced the best results. Although part of the growth in Southern Mediterranean Europe resulted from a shift in traffic away from the Middle East and North Africa, destinations in the Mediterranean also profited from improved outbound flows from markets such as Scandinavia, Germany and the Russian Federation.

Asia and the Pacific (+6 percent) was up 11 million arrivals in 2011, reaching 216 million tourists. South Asia and Southeast Asia (both +9 percent) benefited from strong intraregional demand, while growth was comparatively weaker in North-East Asia (+4 percent) and Oceania (+0.3 percent), partly due to the temporary decline in the Japanese outbound market.

The Americas (+4 percent) saw an increase of 6 million arrivals, reaching 156 million in total. South America, up by 10 percent for the second consecutive year, continued to lead growth. Central America and the Caribbean (both +4 percent) maintained the growth rates of 2010. North America, with a 3 percent increase, hit the 100 million tourists mark in 2011.

Africa maintained international arrivals at 50 million, as the gain of 2 million by Sub-Saharan destinations (+7 percent) was offset by the losses in North Africa (-12 percent). The Middle East (-8 percent) lost an estimated 5 million international tourist arrivals, totaling 55 million. Nevertheless, some destinations such as Saudi Arabia, Oman and the United Arab Emirates sustained steady growth.

The available data on international tourism receipts and expenditure for 2011 closely follows the positive trend in arrivals. Among the top 10 tourist destinations, receipts were up significantly in the U.S. (+12 percent), Spain (+9 percent), Hong Kong (China) (+25 percent) and the U.K. (+7 percent). The top spenders were led by emerging source markets -- China (+38 percent), Russia (+21 percent), Brazil (+32 percent) and India (+32 percent) -- followed by traditional markets, with the growth in expenditure of travelers from Germany (+4 percent) and the U.S. (+5 percent) above the levels of previous years.

UNWTO forecasts international tourism to continue growing in 2012 although at a slower rate. Arrivals are expected to increase by 3 to 4 percent, reaching the historic 1 billion mark by the end of the year. Emerging economies will regain the lead with stronger growth in Asia and the Pacific and Africa (4 percent to 6 percent), followed by the Americas and Europe (2 percent to 4 percent). The Middle East (up to +5 percent) is forecast to start to recover part of its losses from 2011. These prospects are confirmed by the UNWTO Confidence Index. The 400 UNWTO Panel of Experts from around the globe expects the tourism sector to perform positively in 2012, though somewhat weaker than last year. As destinations worldwide look to stimulate travel demand under pressing economic conditions, the UNWTO is urging governments to consider advancing travel facilitation, an area in which in spite of the great strides made so far there is still much room for progress. The UNWTO advises countries to make the most of information and communication technologies in improving visa application and processing formalities, as well as the timings of visa issuance, and to analyze the possible impact of travel facilitation in increasing their tourism economies. (*Travel Pulse, January 16*)

Sunrise invests to attract more tourists

Sunrise has some of the best snow anywhere in the country with 40 inches at mid-mountain. Bill London, the mountain manager, told the Group Sales assemblage Tuesday night (Jan. 10), that crowds have been very good, though probably not at record-setting levels. He said the mountain communicates with Valley and Tucson media everyday to get that message out.

One perception they struggle with is that if snow is not good at Flagstaff, people believe it must be bad everywhere. Snow levels aren't the greatest at Snowbowl this year, while snows have been plentiful here. For instance, the first really good snow in late November/early December dropped about three inches in Flagstaff, but closer to three feet here.

He said that more of their market comes up from Tucson than the Valley, though the numbers are close. As for measuring the number of skiers, he said weekend totals have been around

6,000 skiers a day. Metrics are more accurate with today's technology, he said, since they scan passes.

He said that since snowboarders make up about 65 percent of the market, his crews are putting a lot of effort into making the terrain park more appealing. He added that Sunrise is still a family park offering cross country ski terrain and free sledding.

He also said the resort's owners, the White Mountain Apache, realize they have an asset that needs investment, and they are making moves to reinvest some of their income back into the mountain.

An attraction for the other nine months of the year, the group learned could be the plentiful trails around the forests.

White Mountain Off-Road Trails Association spokesman Maurice Colwell attended the meeting with Lorna Mcneil Cox of the U. S. Forest Service to talk about the off-road trail system in the area.

They said that the Maverick trail is now up around 80 miles long, and has access to all the towns from Pinetop to Clay Springs, so ATV riders can pop into towns for shopping, gas or lunch.

Cox also said that the forest roads are open for ATVs. She said that roads used by the county or towns require ATVs to be street-legal, but that anyone with a state sticker can ride other forest roads. She also said that people come "in droves" in the summer to ride the trails.

A report on the Pinetop Lakes Country Club revealed that the center is trying to expend operations to become more of an attraction. They have purchased a carriage/sleigh for rides, and since very few owners are stabling horses there, they have purchased some of their own to be able to offer rides. They have an amphitheater and will be holding music events twice a month. (*White Mountain Independent, January 16*)

U.S. Travel Association Hails National Strategy to Boost Travel and Tourism

In a first for the U.S., President Barack Obama last week announced a national strategy on travel and tourism to boost travel in the United States. The U.S. travel industry is a cornerstone of the U.S. economy, representing 1.8 trillion in economic output and supporting 14 million American jobs.

"The steps the president took today are significant and will boost travel to and within the United States. Most importantly, they will lead to new American jobs and get our economy moving," said Roger Dow, president and CEO of the U.S. Travel Association. "His timing could not be better. Travel is an essential industry for our nation and a bipartisan issue that can unite our country and rally us forward."

According to a White House statement, today's announcement calls for a national strategy to make the United States the world's top travel and tourism destination, as part of a comprehensive effort to spur job creation. The number of travelers from emerging economies with growing middle classes – such as China, Brazil, and India – is projected to grow by 135%, 274% and 50% respectively by 2016 when compared to 2010.

President Obama will also sign an Executive Order and charge several government agencies to take part in efforts and new initiatives to significantly increase travel. Some of the initiatives include: a new pilot program and rule change for visa processing in China and Brazil, a final rule to expand and make the Global Entry program permanent, appoint new members to the U.S. Travel and Tourism Advisory Board, and the Nomination of Taiwan to the Visa Waiver Program. *(Travel Industry Wire, January 19)*

Hotel Guests Rate Free Wi-Fi at Top of Amenity List

The latest survey proves what many have assumed for some time: Free Hotel Wi-Fi is at the top of the list when guests choose where they will stay. "It is overwhelmingly factored into the decision," says Hotels.com, which conducted the survey.

Thirty-eight percent of travelers reported that free Wi-Fi played a part in their decision as a "must" to stay at a specific hotel, while 35 percent reported it is the simple amenity they want to see more in hotels. Another 31 percent say they wish it would become a standard in all hotels in 2012. "Given the explosion of mobile use in the past few years, it is no surprise that travelers are requiring free and fast Wi-Fi," said Taylor L. Cole, APR, director of public relations and social media for hotels.com. He added:

"Many guests never travel without their tablets, smartphones and laptops. It's as intuitive as packing a toothbrush." Trailing behind Wi-Fi, 23 percent of guests stated their favorite modern in-room amenity was the use of iPads for guest services, local information and personal use.

This ranked above air purifiers/humidifiers, high-end coffee makers, iPod dock, massage chairs, video game systems, universal remote rooms and workout equipment/DVDs. Second to technology, guests are most pleased when their favorite food and beverages are provided during their hotel stay," says Hotel.com.

Forty-five percent reported that their favorite new amenities are happy hours, wine tastings or any other time with free food and drinks. Just less than one-third of travelers expressed their wish to see more complimentary bottled water in their hotel rooms. Travelers felt like extra luxuries like turndown service and bath menus were "not worth the hype," according to 44 percent of female respondents and 30 percent of male respondents.

Despite some guests stealing linens/towels (14 percent) or magazine/books (12 percent) from hotel rooms, over 66 percent of hotel guests have never stolen an item from their hotel room. *(TravelMole, January 19)*

Lodging Forecast Says Hotel Rates will go up this Year

U.S. hotels ended 2011 on a strong note, and will likely recover even more this year, says a lodging forecast released today. According to consulting firm PwC US, a short-term uptick in economic activity in the fourth quarter last year led to higher hotel occupancy rates. Occupancy reached 60.1%, slightly higher than the 10-year average of 60%.

Although the economic environment is still uncertain, PwC expects higher occupancy levels this year, enough to drive hotels to raise rates. The firm expects revenue per available room, a benchmark for hotels, to increase 6.5% this year.

An uptick in business travel, corporate events and other group business is driving the recovery, PwC says. The demand for lodging should increase 1.8% this year while supply will only grow by 0.5%, which should boost occupancy levels to 60.9%. That would be the highest since 2007.

"It will have been a five-year detour, but continued recovery in 2012 is expected to lift industry (revenue per available room) very close to its 2007 peak," says Scott Berman, principal and U.S. industry leader in hospitality and leisure at PwC. "The steepest portion of the demand recovery is behind us with operators' focus on room rate becoming increasingly more important." (*USA Today, January 22*)

Arizona Hotel makes TripAdvisor's "Best Hotels in the US" list

Congratulations to the Adobe Grand Villas in Sedona! The latest "Best Hotels in the US" was just released by TripAdvisor. Arizona came in at #13, with the Adobe Grand Villas in Sedona. For more information, visit <http://www.tripadvisor.com/TravelersChoice-Hotels>

Calendar of Events

Visit www.ArizonaGuide.com to find information on all the exciting [events, festivals and activities](#) held throughout the Grand Canyon State!

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